

VU Research Portal

The political psychology of protest: Sacrificing for a cause

van Stekelenburg, J.

published in

European Psychologist
2013

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1027/1016-9040/a000156](https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000156)

document version

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

van Stekelenburg, J. (2013). The political psychology of protest: Sacrificing for a cause. *European Psychologist*, 18(4), 224-234. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000156>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

The Political Psychology of Protest

Sacrificing for a Cause

Jacqueline van Stekelenburg

Department of Sociology, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Abstract. We live in contentious times. Why are people prepared to sacrifice wealth, a pleasant and carefree life, or sometimes even their lives for a common cause? This question brings us to the individual level of analysis, and therefore to political psychology. People live in a perceived world. Indeed, this is what a political psychology of protest is about – trying to understand why people who are seemingly in the same socio-political configuration respond so differently. I will illustrate this point with an overview of state-of-the-art theoretical approaches and up-to-date empirical evidence. Discussed are grievances, efficacy/cynicism, identification, emotions, and social embeddedness. Most recent approaches combine these concepts into one model comprising two routes: An efficacy route steered by social embeddedness and a grievances route steered by cynicism. The working of the model is illustrated by empirical evidence from contemporary events such as migrants, collective action, demonstrating diasporas, and Social Media protests. Each of these illustrations exemplifies how different aspects of the socio-political context as dual identification, group status, and virtual embeddedness affect individuals' protest behavior. As such the paper aims to provide an overview of political psychological work that may contribute to the understanding of our contentious times.

Keywords: collective action, grievances, identity, emotions, social embeddedness

Arab Spring, protests in Greece and Spain, Tea Party in the US, riots in London, central squares occupied in hundreds of towns. Our times are contentious, indeed. Why do all these people protest? Why are these people prepared to sacrifice wealth, a pleasant and carefree life, or sometimes even their lives for a common cause? These questions are not new, they have intrigued social scientists for a long time. Yet for political psychologists this contentious era *did* create renewed interest in collective action. Take the publications on collective action in the journal *Political Psychology*, until 2000 we saw an average of 2.3 papers per year on collective action and after 2001 it tripled to 6.4 papers per year!¹ We certainly live in contentious times and political psychologists try to understand the psychological aspects of this social and political change.

People live in a perceived world. They respond to the world as they perceive and interpret it. Indeed, this is what a political psychology of protest is about – trying to understand why people who are seemingly in the same

socio-political configuration respond so different. As political psychology explores the causes of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people – and primarily how these are influenced by socio-political context – it has a lot to offer to the study of protest participation.²

I will illustrate this point with an overview of state-of-the-art theoretical approaches and up-to-date empirical evidence. Discussed are grievances, efficacy/cynicism, identification, emotions, and social embeddedness. Most recent approaches combine these concepts into one model. The working of the model will be illustrated by means of empirical evidence from a variety of contemporary contentious actions; that is, migrants, collective action, Social Media protests, and demonstrating diasporas. Each of these empirical illustrations exemplifies how different aspects of people's rootedness in the socio-political context such as dual group identification, informal embeddedness in networks, and group status affect individuals' protest behavior.

¹ Means based on the result of a search term "collective action" in the journal *Political Psychology*, total amount of hits 86 of which 9 were from 1997 to 2000 and 77 from 2001 to 2012.

² Obviously, other disciplines like sociology and political science have protest as their study object too, but in this paper I focus on the political psychological approach and will point to literature from sociology and political science where applicable.

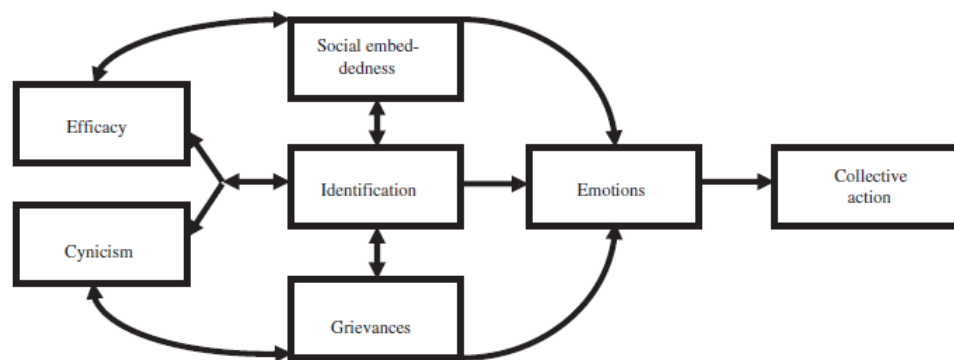


Figure 1. Model of the routes to protest.

Why People Protest

In an answer to the question as to why people protest, I will elaborate on five different antecedents of protest participation: (1) grievances, (2) efficacy, (3) identity, (4) emotions, and (5) social embeddedness. These antecedents are combined into one model as depicted in Figure 1. Note the crucial role of identification and emotions in the model. It is identification with a group which makes people feel for their group, be it grievances, feelings of efficacy, cynicism, or shared emotions (e.g., van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, & van Dijk, 2011). Beyond that, rather than being a separate motivational pathway, we argue that emotions mute or amplify existing motives (Klandermans, van der Toorn, & van Stekelenburg, 2008, van Stekelenburg et al., 2011). Note that we do not want to give the impression that all antecedents indirectly influence collective action through emotions. In fact, following the fundamental theoretical principles of collective action, efficacy, cynicism, grievances, and embeddedness are accredited their direct motivational power. Thus, people are more likely to participate in collective action if they are more aggrieved, but less cynical, feel more efficacious, and are embedded in civil society. For matter of clarity, however, these direct effects are left out of the model.

In terms of relationships *between* the antecedents, we showed in earlier work that the model groups the antecedents into two clusters each building on a *tight reciprocal relationship* between two factors: Efficacy and embeddedness on the one side and political cynicism and grievances on the other side (Klandermans et al., 2008). Models that changed the order within these pairs fitted equally well (note the two-headed arrows) and the two clusters were fairly independent of each other. Hence, this makes for two routes to protest – a social embeddedness route

steered by efficacy and a grievances route steered by cynicism, respectively amplified or muted by emotions (See Klandermans et al. 2008; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2010, 2013). This raises the interesting question as to *when* and *why* people are inclined to take the one or the other route to protest? Based on three cases I will illustrate the working of the model and what route under what contextual circumstances prevails. However, a short exposé on collective action participation and its antecedents will come first.

Collective Action

Protesters are aggrieved people who openly contest established authorities and attempt to change existing power structures. They form the tip of larger masses who feel that their interests and/or values are violated (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans 2009). Hence, protesters are aggrieved, but not all aggrieved people protest (Klandermans, 1997). In fact, passivity in the face of imperilled interests or violated values is more often the rule rather than the exception (Marwell & Oliver, 1993). Next to inactivity, there is a vast array of behaviors that people might exhibit as a reaction to experienced grievances. Wright, Taylor, and Moghaddam (1990) have proposed a framework based on three distinctions: The first between inaction and action, the second between actions directed at improving one's personal conditions (individual action) and actions directed at improving the conditions of one's group (collective action). The third distinction is between actions that conform to the norms of the existing social system (normative action like petitioning and taking part in a demonstration) and those that violate existing social rules (non-normative action like illegal protests and civil disobedience).³

³ Following Wright and colleagues (1990), I will use the terms "collective action" and "protest" as interchangeable: "Responding to membership in a disadvantaged group: From acceptance to collective protest."

From a social psychological viewpoint such taxonomies of participation are relevant because one may expect different forms of participation to involve different motivational dynamics. Motivational dynamics of participation can be distinguished on two dimensions: *time* and *effort* (Klandermans, 1997). Some forms of participation are limited in time or of a once-only kind and involve little effort or risk – giving money, signing a petition, or taking part in a peaceful demonstration. Other forms of participation are also short lived but involve considerable effort or risk – a sit-in, a site-occupation, a strike. Participation can also be indefinite but little demanding – paying a membership fee to an organization or being on call for two nights a month. Finally, there are forms of participation that are both enduring and taxing like being a member on a committee or a volunteer in a movement organization. This distinction accounts for the motivational dynamics underlying differential forms of participation. Indeed, why does one person go to a demonstration while others stay at home? Or why are many more people prepared to sign a petition than to go on strike? Or why is the one person inclined to use violence to pursue the group goals, while others are not? Hence, collective action takes different forms and motivational dynamics underlying them may well differ.

Grievances

At the heart of every protest are grievances, be it the experience of illegitimate inequality, feelings of relative deprivation, feelings of injustice, moral indignation about some state of affairs, or a suddenly imposed grievance (Klandermans, 1997). Illegitimate inequality is what relative deprivation and social justice theories are about. Suddenly imposed grievances refer to an unexpected threat or inroad upon people's rights or circumstances (Walsh, 1981). Feelings of relative deprivation result from comparison of one's situation with a standard – be it one's past, someone else's situation, or a cognitive standard such as equity or justice (Folger, 1986). If comparison results in the conclusion that one is not receiving what one deserves, a person experiences relative deprivation. Runciman (1966) referred to relative deprivation based on personal comparisons as egoistic deprivation and to relative deprivation based on group comparisons as fraternalistic deprivation. Research suggests that fraternalistic deprivation is particularly important for engagement in protest (Major, 1994; Martin, 1986). On the basis of a meta-analysis, van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2008) conclude that the cognitive component of relative deprivation (as reflected in the observation that one receives less than the standard of comparison) has less influence on action participation than the affective component (as expressed by such feelings as dissatisfaction, indignation, and discontent about these outcomes). Next to relative deprivation, social psychologists have applied social justice theory to theorize on grievances and protest (Tyler & Smith, 1998). Social justice literature distinguishes between two classes of justice judg-

ments: Distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice is similar to relative deprivation; it refers to the fairness of outcomes. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of decision-making procedures and the relational aspects of the social process (being treated with respect, dignity, etc.; Tyler & Smith, 1998). People care more about how they are treated than about outcomes – do authorities treat them with respect, can authorities be trusted to do well to their people?

In more general terms, intergroup conflicts can be framed as conflicts on principles or conflicts on material interests (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009). This distinction is important in the context of protest, because in a conflict of interests people are more inclined to take an instrumental route to protest to enforce changes, whereas a conflict of principles more likely leads to protests in which people express their views and indignation (van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, & van Dijk, 2009).

Efficacy and Cynicism

Grievance theories came under attack in the 1970s by scholars arguing that grievances do not provide a sufficient reason to participate in protest. Indeed, grievances abound while protest does not. Therefore, they continue, the key question to address is: Why do some aggrieved people become mobilized, while others do not? Sociologists and political scientists suggested availability of resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and the presence of political opportunities (McAdam, 1982) as key to protest mobilization. Groups with more resources and opportunities are more likely to mobilize. The social psychological answer to the question as to why some people become mobilized, while others do not is efficacy. Efficacy refers to the individual's expectation that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through protest (Gamson, 1992). For the perception of the possibility of change to take hold people need to perceive the group to be able to unite and fight for the issue *and* they must perceive the political context as receptive for the claims made by their group. The first refers to *group efficacy*: The belief that group-related problems can be solved by collective efforts (Bandura, 1997), and the second refers to *political efficacy*: The feeling that political actions can have an impact on the political process (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954). Related to political efficacy is *political cynicism* – defined as the opposite of political efficacy and inversely related to trust in government (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

Identity

In the 1980s it became clear that instrumental motivation rooting in efficacy is not a sufficient reason to participate in protest. Increasingly, the significance of collective identity as a factor stimulating participation in protest was emphasized. Sociologists were among the first to

emphasize the importance of collective identity in protest participation. They argued that the generation of a collective identity is crucial for a movement to emerge (Melucci, 1989; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Similarly, social psychological studies report consistently that the more people identify with a group the more they are inclined to protest on behalf of that group (e.g., Reicher, 1984; Simon et al., 1998; Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000). Also meta-analytically this relation confirmed (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Why is group identification such a powerful motivational push to protest? First of all, identification with others is accompanied by an awareness of similarity and shared fate with those who belong to the same category. Furthermore, the "strength" of an identity comes from its affective component (see Ellemers, 1993 for a similar argument); the more "the group is in me" the more "I feel for us" (Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003) and the stronger I am motivated to participate on behalf of the group. Collective identification, especially the more politicized form of it, intensifies feelings of efficacy (see Simon et al., 1998, van Zomeren et al., 2008). Next to shared fate, shared emotions, and enhanced efficaciousness, identification with others involved generates a felt inner obligation to behave as a "good" group member (Stürmer, Simon, Loewy, & Jörgen, 2003). When self-definition changes from personal to social identity, the group norm of participation becomes salient; the more one identifies with the group, the more weight this group norm will carry and the more it will result in an "inner obligation" to participate on behalf of the group. Together these dynamics explain why group identification functions as a "stepping stone" to a politicized identity. Typically, politicization of identities begins with the awareness of shared grievances. Next, an external enemy is blamed for the group's predicament, and claims for compensation are leveled against this enemy. Unless appropriate compensation is granted, the power struggle continues and gradually the group's relationship to its social environment transforms. If in the course of this struggle the group seeks to win the support of third parties such as more powerful authorities (e.g., the national government) or the general public, identities fully politicize (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Recent work on multiple identities (cf. Kurtz, 2002) emphasizes that people can hold many different identities at the same time, which may push in the same direction or may come into conflict. When two of the groups people identify with end up on opposite sides of a controversy (for example, union members who are faced with the decision to strike against their company), people might find themselves under cross-pressure (Oegema & Klandermans, 1994). Indeed, workers who go on strike or movement activists who challenge their government are often accused of being disloyal to the company or the country. González and Brown (2003) coined the term "dual identity" to point to the *concurrent* workings of identities. These authors argue that identification with a subordinate entity (f.i. ethnic identity) does not necessarily exclude identification with a supraordinate entity (f.i. national identity). In fact, they hold

that a "dual identity" is the desirable configuration as it implies sufficient identification with one's own group to experience some basic security and sufficient identification with the overarching identity to preclude divisiveness. There is evidence that immigrants who display a dual identity are more inclined to take onto the streets on behalf of their group (Simon & Ruhs, 2008). This is further specified by Klandermans et al. (2008) who report that immigrants who display a dual identification tend to be more satisfied with their situation than those who do not display such identity, but *if* they are dissatisfied they are more likely to participate in protest.

Emotions

The study of emotions has become a popular research area in the social psychology of protest. Such was not always the case. As rational approaches were the state of the art, emotions were often regarded as some peripheral "error term" in motivational theories. Anger is seen as *the* prototypical protest emotion (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007). For those of us who have been part of protest events or watched reports on protest events in the news media, this is hardly surprising. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of protest detached from anger. van Zomeren et al. (2004) show that group-based anger is an important motivator of protest participation. There exists a relation to efficacy: People who perceived the ingroup as strong are more likely to experience anger and desire to take action; people who perceive the ingroup as weak are more likely to feel fearful and to move away from the outgroup (Devos, Silver, & Mackie, 2002; Klandermans, van der Toorn, & van Stekelenburg, 2008). Anger moves people to adopt a more challenging relationship with authorities than subordinate emotions such as shame and despair (Taylor, 2009) or fear (Klandermans et al., 2008).

Social Embeddedness

Individual grievances and feelings are transformed into shared grievances and feelings within social networks. Social embeddedness – the quantity and types of relationships with others – can have a form of formal relationships as in party membership or being a member of the labor union (cf. Klandermans et al., 2008), informal relationships, such as friends, family colleagues, and virtual relationships such as active participation in blogs, social media, etc. (van Stekelenburg & Boekkooi, 2013). The effect of interaction in networks on the propensity to participate in politics is contingent on the amount of political discussion that occurs in social networks and the information that people are able to gather about politics as a result (McClurg, 2003). Networks provide space for the creation and dissemination of discourse critical of authorities, and they provide a way for active opposition to these authorities to grow (Paxton,

2002). In other words, this is where people talk politics and thus where the factuality of the socio-political world is constructed and people are mobilized for protest. Being integrated in a network increases the chances that one will be targeted with a mobilizing message and that people are kept to their promises to participate (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). For example: People with friends or acquaintances that are already active within social movements are more likely to take part in movement actions than others (Gould, 1993; Klandermans, 1997). Social networks function as communication channels, discursive processes take place to form consensus that makes up the symbolic resources in collective sense-making (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1988), and people are informed of upcoming events and social capital as trust and loyalty accumulate in networks to provide individuals with the resources needed to invest in protest (Klandermans et al., 2008).

Empirical Illustrations

In what follows empirical illustrations are provided from three different cases of collective action: (1) why migrants protest, (2) why people participate in Social Media protest, and (3) why diasporas protest. These cases show the working of the model, and exemplify how different aspects of people's rootedness in the socio-political context such as dual group identification, embeddedness in informal networks, and group status affect whether people protest or not, and *if* they do whether they take the embeddedness route steered by efficacy or the grievances route steered by cynicism.

Why Migrants Protest⁴

Migrants occupy a delicate position in their "host" societies. They are expected to assimilate into the host culture, and failure to do so is considered a sign of lack of loyalty. Migrants' loyalty to the country of residence is placed under even more doubt if they engage in protest. Under such circumstances, it is unclear what aggrieved migrants should do. Should they stay away from collective action despite their grievances, or act like any other citizen by voicing their discontent? To answer those questions, we surveyed Moroccans and Turks in Amsterdam and Turks in New York.⁵

In line with prior findings under citizens in general, we found that migrants who were aggrieved – specifically those who felt unfairly or disrespectfully treated – were more likely to participate in protest than those who were not. This effect was stronger for migrants who felt politically effective. Moreover, migrants who reported greater political efficacy displayed more anger in response to unfair treatment stemming from their ethnicity, while migrants who reported less political efficacy were more likely to experience fear. In turn, migrants who displayed anger rather than fear participated more extensively in protest. Cynicism both worked to *reduce* and *reinforce* action participation depending on whether it went together with perceived unfairness. The least active were those who combine political cynicism with the feeling that they are treated fairly; the most active were those who combine cynicism with the feeling that they are treated unfairly. A dual identity – concurrent identification with Turkish/Moroccan identity and Dutch/American identity – appeared indeed a healthy socio-political constellation. Migrants who displayed a dual identification were more satisfied with their situation than those who did not display such identity, but *if* they were dissatisfied they were more likely to participate in protest. Finally, embedded migrants – both ethnic and cross-ethnic organizational embeddedness – were more likely to participate in protest than those who were not. Discussions about politics within these networks – particularly ethnic networks – increased efficacy and transformed individual grievances into shared grievances and anger, which translated in protest participation. These findings formed the basis for our model as depicted in Figure 1 with a social embeddedness route steered by efficacy and a grievances route steered by cynicism, respectively amplified or muted by emotions.

Is the model restricted to this specific sample of migrants, or can it be generalized to other migrants or even citizens in general? As for the observed direct effects of grievances, efficacy, embeddedness, identity, and emotions, these are not unique for migrants, but the indirect effects of embeddedness and dual identity might be more specific for migrants. However, they might also be less exceptional than they appear. People who engage in protest tend to be embedded in groups they identify with. But what about embeddedness in informal networks? These networks do not necessarily approve of protest as the right strategy to address social change, in fact they may disapprove of the protests. Therefore, one can imagine that the remaining four antecedents interact differently in approving and disapproving social networks. In what follows, I will put this assumption

⁴ Based on Klandermans, van der Toom, and van Stekelenburg (2008).

⁵ In 2003, we conducted three separate but identical studies: Two in the Netherlands among Turkish ($n = 126$) and Moroccan immigrants ($n = 80$); and one among Turkish immigrants ($n = 100$) in New York. In each study we used snowballing as our sampling strategy. In the Netherlands Turkish and Moroccan students interviewed individuals in their personal environment. In New York interviewees were approached through various organizations. The three studies employed identical questionnaires in Dutch, English, Turkish, and Arabic. In addition to the five antecedents, we created a composite collective action scale by asking our respondents whether they had participated in the following activities in the past 12 months: petitions, hanging up political posters, painting slogans on walls, meetings/rallies about politics, marches/demonstrations, strikes, blocking traffic, occupying a building, consumer or tax boycotts, violent action against humans or property. As we found few systematic differences for the three samples we decided to collapse the three samples and report on the combined sample.

Table 1. (Dis)approving embeddedness and motivational dynamics

Motivational forces	Nonparticipants		Participants	
	Anti (1)	Pro (2)	Anti (3)	Pro (4)
Identification	-.25	-.10	.12	.34
Efficacy	-.47	.06	.25	.43
Grievances	-.37	.05	.07	.49
Anger	-.21	-.03	-.03	.20
Determination to participate	-.69	-.15	.73	.91
N	133	81	34	82

Note. All measures are standardized.

to the test by examining the effects of approving and disapproving informal networks on (non-)participation.

Uploading Unrest⁶

The place and time of the act is the Netherlands, the last week of November, 2007. On 23 November at 50 locations scattered all over the country an estimated 20,000 secondary school pupils took part in a digitally mediated connective action (cf. Bennett and Segerberg 2012) to protest the declining conditions in their education. These protests were initiated by a single secondary school pupil named Kevin, an average guy who wrote *one* MSN message that was “virally” spread via virtual and face-to-face personal networks calling for action on Friday the 23rd. As a message spreads virally, tens of thousands of people may be reached in a matter of days or even hours because people send the message to hundreds of “friends” at a time.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that the logic of connective action differs from the logic of collective action. The *logic of collective action* stresses the essential role of organizations in getting people to join actions. The movement organization tries to activate its constituency employing the organizational networks and communication channels it commands. Participation in *connected action* results from heterogeneous bottom-up created personal action frames. These personalized calls for action move from one person to another – individually, as part of a larger Cc. list, via a listserv, or social media networks such as Facebook or MySpace. Compared to conventional collective actions with an essential role of organizational embeddedness for mobilization and motivation, the more personalized, digitally mediated connective action formations rely much more on informal and virtual embeddedness. Studies show the importance of informal networks in explaining differential recruitment and mobilization

(e.g., Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Importantly though, not all networks are conducive to protest. In fact, social networks nourish beliefs, values, norms, and identities that may encourage or discourage participation, consequently embeddedness may increase or decrease individual chances to become involved. Obviously, organizations attempts to encourage their constituency to participate with persuasive coherent messages, however, the messages which snowball through informal and virtual networks are expected to be far more diverse, indeed ranging from messages encouraging participation to messages discouraging participation. To examine this disparate role of informal embeddedness on participation in protest we surveyed participants and nonparticipants of highschool walkouts.⁷

Seventy-one percent of the participants came from approving milieus (i.e., classmates, friends, peers, parents in favor of the protests) while 62% of the nonparticipants came from disapproving milieus. Hence, the majority of the respondents behaved in accordance with the norms of their milieus. Individuals from approving milieus were not only more targeted by mobilizing messages, they also found those messages more convincing. The motivational patterns also differed (see Table 1). The motivational forces of nonparticipating pupils from disapproving milieu (column 1) were all below average, in contrast to the motivational forces of participating pupils from approving milieu, which were all above average (column 4). These findings clearly illustrate that embeddedness not only encourages participation, but can discourage it as well.

These findings corroborate a great deal of empirical work showing that social ties are important to collective action participation. They confirm that people are more likely to participate if they are connected to others who are also sympathetic to the cause. It is through these links that potential activists develop a certain vision of the world, acquire information, learn about upcoming actions, and are asked to join. However – and perhaps more important – these findings reveal that social milieus are not always

⁶ Based on van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013).

⁷ Collecting data among participants and non-participants was a challenge in itself. Indeed, how to gather data on participants in scattered protests and how to find non-participants? We decided to collect email addresses of participants. Via email, we approached the 350 pupils whose email addresses we got with two questions: (1) a request to fill in an online questionnaire, and (2) a request to forward the email to all pupils in their virtual address books (e.g., Facebook, MSN, Outlook, etc.); after 1 week we sent a reminder. By means of this “virtual snowball” 340 pupils filled in the questionnaire (214 (66%) non-participants, and 116 (34%) participants). In addition to questions related to antecedents of collective action participation we assessed whether they were rooted in supportive milieus: “To what extent do the following people stand behind the protests: parents/friends/classmates”: from (1) not at all to (7) very much.

approving but can also be *disapproving*. This may seem obvious, however, disapproving social milieus and its effects on (non-)participation are seldom reported in the literature. Our results indicate that non-supportive social milieus appear an important reason for nonparticipation. In fact, with every step in the mobilization chain chances of participation *increase* for people from supportive milieus, while those chances *decrease* for people embedded in disapproving milieus. Embeddedness in approving milieus *increases* the chance of being asked, influenced, and motivated by significant others, while embeddedness in disapproving milieus *decreases* the chance of being asked, influenced, and motivated by significant others. The role of embeddedness is apparently more complex than we once thought. In the third case I will expand on the role of organizational embeddedness by relating it to low and high group status.

Why Diasporas Demonstrate⁸

Flows of migration create worldwide “imagined communities.” Although migration is of all times, the creation and maintenance of such imagined communities is nowadays facilitated by media like satellite television and the Internet. Through these media, people are well informed about the ups and downs of their diasporic brothers and sisters. “Explosive import products” such as the war in Iraq or the Gaza conflicts in Israel are vividly transmitted and politicize diasporas worldwide. Conflicts taking place in the diaspora may – as a consequence – pore over to other countries even thousands of miles away. This raises the question as to why people take part in such diasporic transnational protest. To answer that question we surveyed two religious diasporas in the Netherlands (Jews and Muslims).

We reasoned that – just like migrants’ protest – diasporic transnational protest could be predicted by the antecedents of the model (grievances, efficacy, identity, emotions, and social embeddedness). However, we expected that relative group status influences the paths taken to protest. Societies tend to be organized as group-based social hierarchies in which groups enjoy greater social status and power than other groups (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006, p. 271). We maintain that Jews enjoy a higher social status in Dutch society than Muslims. Three reasons lay at the core of this claim. First, only 45% of Dutch natives hold a favorable view toward Muslims, while 85% hold a favorable view toward Jews (Pew Research Center, 2005). Second, in terms of ethnic hierarchy, Dutch prefer Northern European immigrants most, followed by

Jews, Southern Europeans, former colonial groups, and finally Islamic groups such as Moroccans and Turks (Verkuyten, Hagendoorn, & Masson, 1996, p. 1104). Third, in terms of social distance, only 3% of Dutch natives want nothing to do with Jews, while Moroccans (19%) and Turks (32%) score significantly higher (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007, p. 11). Politically, Jews are also more powerful. They are particularly able in utilizing economic resources within and beyond their communities (Gold, 2002, p. 59). Diaspora Jews are more skilled and better educated than average citizens in the country of residence (van Solinge & van Imhoff, 2001) and they strongly rely on ethno-religious ties to achieve economic ends (Gold, 2002, p. 64). The Jewish diaspora is firmly built on institutional foundations and as a result Jews are accepted as legitimate members of ethnic communities (Safran, 2005, p. 59). This legitimization creates political opportunities for the group, with lobbying as a prime example of how diasporas engage in political actions that serve the interests of the homeland. Taken together, this indicates that – compared to Muslims – Jews are politically more powerful and enjoy a higher social status in Dutch society. We assumed that the more powerful and resourceful Jews were more inclined to take the embeddedness route steered by efficacy while the less powerful Muslims with a relatively lower social status were expected to take the grievances path steered by cynicism.⁹

Results suggest that differences in social status between Jews and Muslims in The Netherlands made Jews and Muslims follow different pathways to diasporic transnational activism (see Figure 2). Jews took an *efficacy pathway* that concerned embeddedness in civil society which enhanced feelings of efficacy, whereas Muslims took a *cynicism pathway*, which concerns the interplay of grievances and cynicism. Efficacious Jews also felt more angry about the treatment of Jews, while such effects did not emerge among Muslims. Jews were more embedded in civil society organizations than Muslims. However, while embeddedness raised feelings of efficacy for the Jews it did not so for the Muslims. Embedded Muslims participated more in collective action, just like Jews, yet they did *not* feel more efficacious. Jews seem – due to their higher social status and power – more embedded in Dutch society, and those who *are* embedded have strong social capital at their disposal, which makes them feel more efficacious and angry. Muslims, on the other hand, are less embedded due to their subordinate status and those who *are* embedded have less resourceful social capital at their disposal which seems to dampen their feelings of efficacy. The cynicism pathway shows that Muslims rather than

⁸ Based on van Stekelenburg and van Ginkel (2013).

⁹ Two identical surveys were conducted among Muslims ($N = 190$) and Jews ($N = 88$) in the Netherlands during July 2009 to January 2010. A total of 278 persons between the age of 13 and 74 took part in these surveys. The dependent variable was similar to the one in the migrant study (a composite collective action measure ranging from 0 to 10). For independent variables we chose to examine grievances, political cynicism, efficacy, and emotions both at the national and international level. This is because migrants and religious minorities direct their claims toward/in the nation-state, making national level – in addition to transnational level – an essential feature in understanding diaspora practices (Koopmans, Stratham, Giugni, & Passy, 2005). We gained access to a large pool of possible respondents by contacting ethno-religious organizations that supported or organized collective action on behalf of Muslims or Jews. In addition it became clear that these organizations used internet *fora* and social networking websites as an important tool to mobilize people, therefore we distributed our questionnaire via similar channels to address potential respondents.

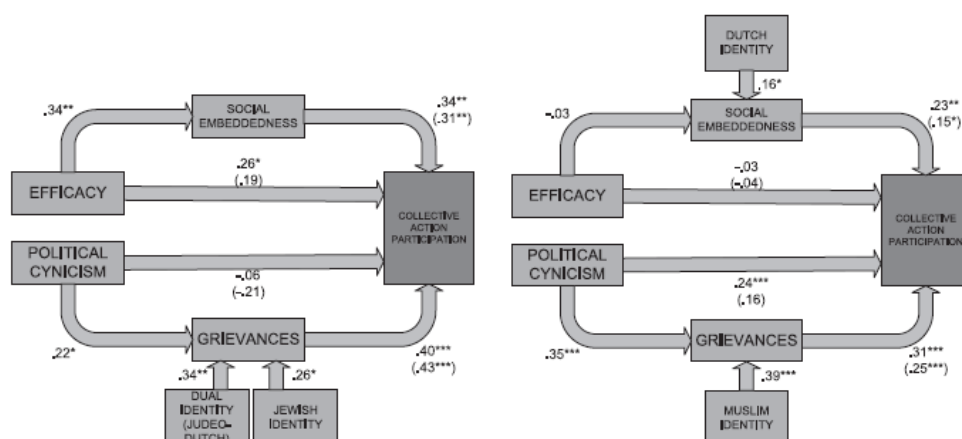


Figure 2. Pathways to collective action participation for Jews (left) and Muslims (right). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

feeling efficacious, were cynical and had less trust in politicians. They strongly identified with fellow Muslims elsewhere in the world and were cynical about politicians' willingness to deal with the alleged injustice to their group. The strong identification accompanied by shared grievances and shared cynicism brought them on the streets for transnational diasporic issues.

The findings of the migrants were replicated, and generalized to a broader minority population – that is, next to migrants also native religious minorities – and generalized from issues related to the country of residence to worldwide diasporic issues. This adds to the robustness of the model. Yet, at the same time this diaspora study reveals a more nuanced picture. It shows that the relative social status of a group in a country affects *whether* people protest, and if they do, *why* they do so. Furthermore, it discloses the role of social status on embeddedness and efficacy; namely that embeddedness enhances protest participation both for low and high social status groups, *but* embeddedness only raises feelings of efficacy for high status groups.

Conclusion

These cases demonstrate the working of the model. They show two routes to protest: A social embeddedness route steered by efficacy and a grievances route steered by cynicism, respectively amplified or muted by emotions. Perceptions of the socio-political context – cynicism and efficacy – play a crucial role, and group identification (Case 1), informal embeddedness (Case 2), and group status (Case 3) affect how and when these perceptions affect protest behavior. Case 1 illustrates the working of the model and justifies identification's central role. The stronger people identify, the more they are inclined to protest on behalf of their group; identification with a group makes people *feel*

for their group – be it grievances, efficacy, or emotions – and dual identification provides a strong link to the group at stake, and simultaneously affords loyalty and trust to the national context in which the conflict has to be fought out. Cases 2 and 3 demonstrate the effects of informal and organizational embeddedness. They illustrate how embeddedness in (dis)approving informal networks and organizational embeddedness in low or high status civil societies influences *if* people protest or not, and if they do which route to protest they take. Being embedded in approving or disapproving informal networks encourages or discourages participation and is therefore an important predictor for participation versus nonparticipation. It is in these networks where people talk politics and thus where the factuality of the socio-political world is constructed and people are mobilized – or demobilized! – for protest. Group status, finally, is about organizational embeddedness. Societies tend to be organized as group-based social hierarchies in which groups enjoy greater social status and power than other groups. Members of high status groups take the embeddedness route steered by efficacy following from their powerful civil societies while members from low status groups take the grievances route steered by cynicism following from their lack of power and distrust in politicians.

Collective action takes many forms. Does the model stand for all these forms? In fact, we do not know. In our work so far, the model accounted for participation in street demonstrations and a composite measure of collective action (ranging from signing petitions to violent actions). But what about more risky and costly forms of collective action? We know for instance that normative forms of protest like petitioning and demonstrations tend to attract highly efficacious people, while non-normative protests such as violent actions are more likely to attract inefficacious people (Tausch et al., 2008). Translated to our model, this would imply that people opting for this “nothing-to-lose-strategy”

(Kamans, Otten, & Gordijn, 2011) are more inclined to take the grievances route steered by cynicism. And what about participation in other risky forms like sit-ins, strikes, and site-occupations? Also in terms of costs, there remain many unanswered questions. Is the model able to account for the different motivational dynamics underlying low-cost single case "post-it" activities and demanding activities like being a member on a committee or a volunteer in a movement organization? One would expect long costly actions to be steered by embeddedness and efficacy as this resource-rich context enables to share the burden, but again this remains an unanswered question. Hence, still much research remains to be done on questions related to motivational dynamics and different forms of collective action.

The illustrative cases reveal the complex role of group identification and social embeddedness in protest participation. Clearly, if people are mad and decide to not take it anymore, the decision to protest – or not – is not taken in a social vacuum. Collective struggles root in a socio-political context and are, by definition, fought out in this context. Roggeband (2004) for example, showed that the dynamics of participation are created and limited by characteristics of the national contexts in which people are embedded. So far, political psychological research has hardly focused on the subjective experience of such macro-level or meso-level factors. To be sure, three decades ago Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed social structural characteristics as *permeability of the group boundaries, stability, and illegitimacy* affect people's inclination to protest. Experimental research within the SIT tradition (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ellemers, 1993) showed how permeability, legitimacy, and stability – as the manipulated conditions of the intergroup situation – affect people's choice of strategy. The conclusions of this experimental research are in accordance with Tajfel & Turner's (1986) assumption that an individual threatened by the status of the ingroup, will first attempt to exit it. Thus in case of collective disadvantages, individuals will first attempt individual mobility. Feelings of illegitimacy – especially when group status is unstable and group boundaries are impermeable – may elicit social change/collective strategy. However, when research in natural contexts was attempted, a different pattern emerged. Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, and Mielke (1999) assessed social enhancement strategies and individuals' perception of the structure of intergroup relationships (permeability, legitimacy, stability) in a natural context of intergroup conflict (between East and West Germans). In this natural context the model predicted collective/social change strategies rather poorly. Subjective perceptions of the social context were thus good to manipulate in the laboratories, but what do they tell us about how real life economic, social, and political processes affect the routes that individual participants take toward protest? How do political opportunities or restraints, or the strength or weakness of civil societies affect the routes that individual participants take toward participation? Future political psychological research should try to

identify variables at the meso- or macro-level that are important in affecting peoples' *subjective* interpretations of their collective disadvantages. Certainly, SIT would be a good start, as perceptions of the context in many respects refer to grievances and efficacy. Permeability (i.e., the possibility for individuals to "pass" into the other group), for example, may act as political opportunity/restraint. Stability can be a judgment on the efficacy of the action and illegitimacy may relate to the realization of grievances.¹⁰ To assess collective enhancement strategies – such as collective action – in natural settings some "concept-translation" may be needed. As political psychology explores the causes of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people – and primarily how these are influenced by socio-political context – it is well versed to do so.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman.
- Bennett, L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. Digital media and the personalization of collective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15, 739–768.
- Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & Miller, W. E. (1954). *The voter decides*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.
- Cappella, J. N., & Jamieson, K. H. (1997). *Spiral of cynicism: The press and the public good*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Devos, T., Silver, L. A., & Mackie, D. M. (2002). Experiencing intergroup emotions. In D. M. Mackie & E. R. Smith (Eds.), *From prejudice to intergroup emotions: Differentiated reactions to social groups* (pp. 111–134). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Ellemers, N. (1993). The influence of socio-structural variables on identity management strategies. In W. Stroebe & M. Hewston (Eds.), *European review of social psychology* (Vol. 4, pp. 27–58). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Folger, R. (1986). Rethinking equity theory: A referent cognitions model. In H. W. Bierhoff, R. L. Cohen, & J. Greenberg (Eds.), *Justice in social relations* (pp. 145–162). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gold, S. J. (2002). *The Israeli diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- González, R., & Brown, R. (2003). Generalization of positive attitudes as a function of subgroup and superordinate group identifications in intergroup contact. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, 195–214.
- Gould, R. (1993). Collective action and network structure. *American Sociological Review*, 58, 182–196.
- Kamans, E., Otten, S., & Gordijn, E. H. (2011). Threat and power in intergroup conflict: How threat determines emotional and behavioral reactions in powerless groups. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 14, 293–310.
- Klandermans, B. (1988). The formation and mobilization of consensus. In B. Klandermans, H. Kriesi, & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *From structure to action: Comparing social movement research across cultures* (Vol. 1, pp. 173–196). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Klandermans, B. (1997). *The social psychology of protest*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

¹⁰ I'd like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion

- Klandermans, B., & Oegema, D. (1987). Potentials, networks, motivations, and barriers: Steps toward participation in social movements. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 519–531.
- Klandermans, B., van der Toom, J., & van Stekelenburg, J. (2008). Embeddedness and grievances: Collective action participation among immigrants. *American Sociological Review*, 73, 992–1012.
- Koopmans, R., Stratham, P., Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship. Immigration and cultural diversity in Europe*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kurtz, S. (2002). *All kinds of justice: Labor and identity politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Major, B. (1994). From social inequality to personal entitlement: The role of social comparisons, legitimacy appraisals, and group memberships. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 26, 293–355.
- Martin, J. (1986). The tolerance of injustice. In J. M. Olson, C. P. Herman, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *Relative deprivation and social comparison: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 4, pp. 217–242). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Marwell, G., & Oliver, P. (1993). *The critical mass in collective action: A micro-social theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McAdam, D. (1982). *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930–1970*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilisation and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82, 1212–1241.
- McClurg, S. D. (2003). Social networks and political participation: The role of social interaction in explaining political participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56, 448–464.
- Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present: Social movements and individual needs in contemporary society*. London, UK: Hutchinson Radius.
- Mummendey, A., Kessler, T., Klink, A., & Mielke, R. (1999). Strategies to cope with negative social identity: Predictions by Social Identity Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 229–245.
- Oegema, D., & Klandermans, B. (1994). Why social movement sympathizers don't participate: Erosion and nonconversion of support. *American Sociological Review*, 59, 703–722.
- Paxton, P. (2002). Social capital and democracy: An interdependent relationship. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 254–277.
- Pew Research Center. (2005). *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2005/07/14/islamic-extremism-common-concern-for-muslim-and-western-publics/>
- Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., & Levi, S. (2006). Social dominance theory and the dynamics of intergroup relations: Taking stock and looking forward. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 17, 271–320.
- Reicher, S. (1984). The St. Paul's riot: An explanation of the limits of crowd action in terms of a social identity model. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 14, 1–21.
- Roggeband, C. M. (2004). Instantly I thought we should do the same thing. International inspiration and exchange in feminist action against sexual violence. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 11, 159–175.
- Runciman, W. G. (1966). *Relative deprivation and social justice*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Safran, W. (2005). The Jewish diaspora in a comparative and theoretical perspective. *Israel Studies*, 10, 36–60.
- Simon, B., & Klandermans, B. (2001). Towards a social psychological analysis of politicized collective identity: Conceptualization, antecedents, and consequences. *American Psychologist*, 56, 319–331.
- Simon, B., Loewy, M., Stürmer, S., Weber, U., Freytag, P., Habig, C., ... Spahlinger, P. (1998). Collective identification and social movement participation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 646–658.
- Simon, B., & Ruhs, D. (2008). Identity and politicization among Turkish migrants in Germany: The role of dual identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1354–1366.
- Sniderman, P. M., & Hagendoorn, L. (2007). *When ways of life collide. Multiculturalism and its discontents in the Netherlands*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stryker, S., Owens, T. J., & White, R. W. (Eds.). (2000). *Self, identity, and social movements* (Vol. 13). Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Press.
- Stürmer, S., Simon, B., Loewy, M., & Jörgen, H. (2003). The dual-pathway model of social movement participation: The case of the fat acceptance movement. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66, 71–82.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. Austin (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup behavior* (pp. 7–24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Tausch, N., Becker, J. C., Spears, R., Christ, O., Saab, R., Singh, P., & Siddiqui, R. N. (2011). Explaining radical group behavior: Developing emotion and efficacy routes to normative and nonnormative collective action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101, 129–148.
- Taylor, V. (2009, September). *The changing demand side of contention: From structure to meaning*. Paper presented at the Conference on Advancements in Social Movement Theories, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Taylor, V., & Whittier, N. E. (1992). Collective identity in social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization. In A. Morris & C. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory* (pp. 104–129). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Tyler, T. R., & Smith, H. J. (1998). Social justice and social movements. In D. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 595–629). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- van Solinge, H., & van Imhoff, E. (2001). Sociaal demografisch profiel [Sociodemographic profile]. In H. van Solinge & M. de Vries (Eds.), *De Joden in Nederland anno 2001. Demografisch profiel en binding in het Jodendom* (pp. 29–45). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Aksant.
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Boekkooi, M. (2013). Mobilizing for change in a changing society. In J. van Stekelenburg, C. M. Roggeband, & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *The future of social movement research: Dynamics, mechanisms, and processes*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2007). Individuals in movements: A social psychology of contention. In C. M. Roggeband & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *The handbook of social movements across disciplines* (pp. 157–204). New York, NY: Springer.
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2009). Social movement theory: Past, present and prospect. In I. van Kessel & S. Ellis (Eds.), *Movers and shakers: Social movements in Africa* (pp. 17–44). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2010). The social psychology of protest. *Current Sociology*, 61, 886–905. doi: 10.1177/0011392113479314
- van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2013). *Uploading unrest. Comparing mobilization and participation in connective versus collective action*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., & van Dijk, W. W. (2009). Context matters. Explaining why and how mobiliz-

- ing context influences motivational dynamics. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 815–838.
- van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., & van Dijk, W. W. (2011). Combining motivations and emotion: The motivational dynamics of collective action participation. *Revista de Psicologia Social*, 26, 91–104.
- van Stekelenburg, J., & van Ginkel, R. (2013). *Demonstrating diasporas*. Manuscript in preparation.
- van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 504–535.
- van Zomeren, M., Spears, R., Fischer, A. H., & Leach, C. W. (2004). Put your money where your mouth is! Explaining collective action tendencies through group-based anger and group efficacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 649–664.
- Verkuyten, M., Hagendoorn, L., & Masson, K. (1996). The ethnic hierarchy among minority and majority youth in the Netherlands. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26, 1104–1118.
- Walsh, E. J. (1981). Resource mobilization and citizen protest in communities around three mile Island. *Social Problems*, 29, 1–21.
- Wright, S. C., Taylor, D. M., & Moghaddam, F. M. (1990). The relationship of perceptions and emotions to behavior in the face of collective inequality. *Social Justice Research*, 4, 229–250.
- Yzerbyt, V., Dumont, M., Wigboldus, D., & Gordijn, E. (2003). I feel for us: The impact of categorization and identification on emotions and action tendencies. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42, 533–549.

Jacqueline van Stekelenburg

Department of Sociology
VU University Amsterdam
De Boelelaan 1081
1081 HV Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. +31 20 598-6749
Fax +31 20 598-6860
E-mail j.van.stekelenburg@vu.nl

Received November 1, 2012

Accepted May 14, 2013

Published online

About the author



Jacqueline van Stekelenburg is an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department of the VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She studies the social psychological dynamics of protest participation, with a special interest in group identification, emotions, and ideologies as motivators for collective action and has published widely in the field. With Klandermans (VU University Amsterdam) and Walgrave (Antwerpen University, Belgium), she is currently conducting an international comparative study on street demonstrations funded by the European Science Foundation, entitled *Caught in the act of protest: Contextualized contestation*. She is also working on a study on emerging networks and feelings of belonging funded by the Dutch Royal Academy of Science, entitled *The evolution of collective action in emerging neighbourhoods*.